



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

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Environment and Conservation to Hold Mercury Thermometer Swap January 29

NASHVILLE - The Department of Environment and Conservation is inviting Nashville-area residents to a Mercury Thermometer Swap on Thursday, Jan. 29, 2009, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Nashville Environmental Field Office on 711 R.S. Gass Boulevard.

At the event, citizens may exchange their old mercury thermometers for new, mercury-free thermometers provided by Environment and Conservation and free of charge. Individuals are asked to bring their old mercury thermometers in secure storage cases. If cases are not available or thermometers are broken, they should be placed inside a 12-ounce plastic bottle with secured screw-cap lids. There is a limit of two new thermometers per household.

The thermometer exchange is limited to household thermometers containing mercury. Other types of waste containing mercury, including old thermostats, barometers, manometers and other devices will not be accepted. These items should be disposed of during Household Hazardous Waste collection events. Please call (615) 532-9265 or visit www.tn.gov/environment/swm/hhw for more information about the proper disposal of Household Hazardous Waste or scheduled collection events.

In addition to the thermometer swap, department staff will be on hand to provide the public with information about radon. Residents also will have the opportunity to sign up for a free radon test kit, which will be mailed directly to registered participants.

"As Radon Action Month draws to a close, the department thought this would be an excellent opportunity to continue its outreach efforts in educating the public on the dangers of mercury and radon exposure," said Charles Jobe, environmental coordinator for the Office of Environmental Assistance.

Mercury Facts

Mercury is a toxic substance and mercury thermometers pose both environmental and health hazards. Broken thermometers are potential sources of injury and contamination. If a thermometer is broken and the mercury is not handled properly, the mercury can disperse in the air as vapor - its most dangerous form - and be inhaled. Once mercury enters the bloodstream, it can damage the brain, spinal cord, kidneys and liver. Children and fetuses are at special risk.

If a mercury thermometer should break, individuals are advised never to use a vacuum cleaner to clean the mercury spill. The vacuum cleaner can disperse mercury vapor in the air, increasing the dangers of mercury exposure and contaminating the vacuum cleaner. For more information on proper clean-up procedures for broken thermometers, please visit the Tennessee Department of Health's Web site at: <http://health.state.tn.us/environmental/mercury.htm>.

(MORE)

Radon Facts

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that can seep into homes through cracks and openings in their foundations. It cannot be seen, tasted or smelled, but in concentrated levels radon can pose a threat to human health. The EPA estimates that approximately 70 percent of Tennessee's population lives in high risk or moderate risk radon areas. According to the EPA, radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States.

The best time to test is during consistently cold weather, usually from October to March. This is the time of year when doors and windows are shut, so test results are more representative of in-home exposure. Radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors for a cost comparable to that of many common household repairs, such as painting or installing a new water heater.

For more information, please visit Environment and Conservation's Web site at www.tn.gov/environment/ea/radon or contact the department's Radon Program at 1-800-232-1139 or TDEC.Radon@state.tn.us.

Directions to the Department of Environment and Conservation's Nashville Environmental Field Office can be found by visiting: www.tn.gov/environment/efo/nashville.shtml.

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